

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1                     1.       A software system for efficient procurement of operating  
2                     resources within an enterprise, comprising:  
3                     requisition record generating means for generating a requisition record  
4                     for a requisition, the requisition record indicating at least an operating resource  
5                     that a requestor desires to purchase, the requisition record generating means  
6                     generating the requisition record responsive to a combination of:  
7                     input by a requestor; and  
8                     operating resource information in an operating resource  
9                     information database;  
10                    approval path determining means, responsive to the requisition record  
11                    and to approval rules in an approval rules database, for determining an approval  
12                    path for the requisition record, among various ones of a plurality of possible  
13                    approvers, required to approve the requisition record;  
14                    approval path handling means for guiding the requisition record along  
15                    the determined approval path, wherein the approval path handling means  
16                    generates a global approval indication in response to the requisition record  
17                    successfully traversing the approval path.

1                     2.       The system of claim 1, and further comprising:  
2                     order generating means for generating an order record to a supplier of  
3                     the desired operating resource and for communicating the order to the supplier.

1                     3.       The system of claim 2, wherein the requisition record includes  
2                     an indication of the supplier.

1 <sup>put 027</sup>4. The system of claim 2, wherein the order generating means  
2 includes means for determining a method of communicating the order to the  
3 supplier, responsive to a supplier database.

1 5. The system of claim 1, wherein the approval path handling  
2 means determining means determines the approval path for the requisition record  
3 at least in part in response to a purchase amount field in the requisition record.

1 6. The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating  
2 means includes means for retrieving information about the requestor from a  
3 personal profile database associated with the requestor.

1 7. The system of claim 6, wherein the information retrieved from  
2 the personal profile includes address information representing a destination to  
3 which it is desired for the operating resource to be sent and a department in  
4 which the requestor works.

1 8. The system of claim 6, and further including means for the  
2 requestor to override the information about the requestor retrieved from the  
3 personal profile database associated with the requestor.

1 9. The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating  
2 means includes means for assigning a unique identifier to the requisition.

1           10.     The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating  
2 means includes means for receiving a unique identifier assigned to the requisition  
3 by the user via a user input means.

1           11.     The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating  
2 means includes:

3                 means for receiving an indication of a hold time from the user via a user  
4 input means,

5                 wherein the approval path handling means begins to guide the  
6 requisition along the approval path upon occurrence of the hold time.

1           12.     The system of claim 1, and further including:  
2                 means for submitting a requisition in response to the global approval  
3 indication;

4                 wherein the requisition record generating means includes:

5                 means for receiving an indication of a hold time from the user via a user  
6 input means,

7                 wherein the requisition submitting means submits the requisition only  
8 upon occurrence of the hold time.

1           13.     The system of claim 1, wherein the requisition record generating  
2 means includes:

3                 means for receiving input from the requestor specifying a currency unit,  
4 and

5                 means for reporting a purchase amount for the operating resource in  
6 units of the specified currency unit.

1 *sub 7* 14. The software system of claim 1, and further comprising:  
2 *a3* adaptor means for retrieving data from a legacy database program;  
3 wherein the requisition record generating means completes fields of the  
4 requisition record using the data retrieved from the legacy database program,  
5 whereby avoiding duplication of data already available.

1 15. The software system of claim 14, wherein the adaptor means  
2 includes a directory service adaptor for interfacing to a directory service of the  
3 enterprise.

1 16. The software system of claim 15, wherein the adaptor means is  
2 a human resource management system adaptor for interfacing to a human  
3 resource management system of the enterprise.

1 *sub 7* 17. The software system of claim 16, wherein the adaptor means  
2 includes means for interacting to the legacy database program on a periodic basis.

1 18. The software system of claim 14, wherein the adaptor means  
2 includes means, responsive to the global approval indication, for transferring the  
3 requisition to an ERP system of the enterprise.

1 19. The software system of claim 18, wherein the adaptor means  
2 further includes means for retrieving, from the ERP system of the enterprise, a  
3 purchase order number corresponding to the requisition.

1           20.     The software system of claim 18, wherein the adaptor means  
2 further includes means for retrieving supplier information from the ERP system  
3 of the enterprise.

1           21.     The software system of claim 20, and further comprising:  
2 means for creating a supplier profile based on the supplier information  
3 retrieved from the ERP system of the enterprise.

1           22.     The software system of claim 1, wherein:  
2 *Am 617* the approval rules each include a predicate and a consequence; and  
3 the approval path determining means determines whether a particular  
4 one of the approval rules applies by applying the predicate to at least one field of  
5 the requisition record; and  
6 when the approval path determining means determines that a particular  
7 one of the approval rules applies, the approval path determining means  
8 determines the approval path with respect to that approval rule by applying the  
9 consequence of the approval rule.

1           23.     The software system of claim 1, wherein:  
2 *Am 615* the approval rules database includes an order definition of which, if any,  
3 required approvers must approve the requisition serially and which, if any, may  
4 approve the requisition in parallel; and  
5 the approval path handling means operates responsive to the order  
6 definition.

1           24.    The system of claim 1, wherein the approval path handling  
2 means includes:

3               notification means, responsive to a position of the requisition record  
4 along the approval path, for notifying whichever approver is at that position that  
5 action is required to be taken on the requisition.

1           25.    The software system of claim 24, wherein the approval path  
2 handling means includes:

3               status change recognition means that recognizes a change in status of the  
4 requisition as a result of action taken by an approver, and

5               notification means, wherein the notification means operates responsive  
6 to the status change recognition means to notify the requestor of the status  
7 ~~change.~~

1           26.    The software system of claim 1, wherein:  
2 the action taken by the approver at a particular position in the approval  
3 path includes one of:

4               approving the requisition; and

5               denying the requisition; and

6               the approval path handling means moves the requisition to a next  
7 position in the approval path responsive to the approver at the particular position  
8 approving the requisition.

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1           27.    The software system of claim 26, wherein:  
2 the approval path handling means includes non-response handling  
3 means, responsive to an amount of time during which the requisition is at a

4 particular position in the approval path without any action being taken by the  
5 approver at that position, for moving the requisition to another approver who has  
6 a predetermined relationship to the approver who took no action.

1 28. The software system of claim 27, wherein:  
2 the predetermined relationship is indicated by chain of command data  
3 defined in an ERP database, and  
4 *Sub* the system further includes an ERP adaptor for accessing the chain of  
5 command data from the ERP database.

1 29. The system of claim 26, and further comprising:  
2 notification means, wherein in response to the requisition being moved  
3 to the next position in the approval path, the notification means notifies the  
4 approver at said next position that action is required to be taken, by that  
5 approver, on the requisition.

1 *Then* 30. The software system of claim 26, wherein:  
2 the action taken by the approver at the particular location in the  
3 approval path further includes:  
4 modifying at least a portion of the requisition record; and  
5 the approval handling means includes modification response means,  
6 operating in response to an approver modifying a requisition, for causing the  
7 approval path determining means to determine a replacement approval path,  
8 responsive to the modified requisition.

31. The system of claim 1, wherein the approval path handling means includes non-response handling means, responsive to a request from the requestor, for moving the requisition from a first approver who has taken no action to a second approver who has a predetermined relationship to the approver ~~who took no action.~~

32. The system of claim 31, wherein, responsive to moving the request from the first approver, the approval path handling means prevents the first approver from action on the requisition.

33. The system of claim 31, wherein the predetermined relationship is at least partially defined in the approval rules.

34. The system of claim 1, and further including:  
delegation of authority means for receiving a request from a first approver for delegating the authority of the first approver to a second approver by configuring the approval path handling means to modify the approval path such that the approval path includes the second approver in place of the first approver.